

Example of newjack: guarding sing sing book review

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Main theme in the book

The main theme of this book is correction services in the prisons. The author was a prison warden who got a first-hand account of what happens in the correctional facilities in the United States. The book explores the problems faced by the inmates as they undertake their daily chores in the prisons. Ted shows that the prisoners dislike the wardens and view them as sadists and authoritarian who do not take any point from the prisoners. This makes the prisoners view the wardens as bad guys thus triggering a crisis between the prisoners and the correctional officers.

Plot of the book

The book is set in the world most famous correctional facilities; Sing Sing that is located beside HudsonRiver in New York and the Alcatraz in San Francisco. The author was interested I knowing what happen in the correctional facilities. The plan used was robust since the author applied for a position as a warden in the Sing Sing prison in New York. Ted wanted to get first-hand information on what happens in prisons at the perspective of a warden since many journals and other publications mostly dwelt on the situation in the perspective of the prisoners. For example in the New York state, there were 26000 wardens or correctional officers serving 71 prisons. However, many officers did not sever the prisons for more than two years hence Ted wanted to determine the mystery behind this situation. The story continues to establish that Sing Sing was constructed in 1826v from inmates' labor. During those days, two prisoners were to share a small cell thus it was common to have and spread communicable diseases. The wardens were not

left in the misery since they interacted with prisoners more often hence they were also endangered by diseases such as TB, AIDS among others. In addition the narrator explains that that prison wardens record one of the highest rates of divorce in the USA, ease of getting heart diseases and also addiction to drugs and alcohol as a measure to reduce the stress. This implies that the life expectancy of a warden is shorter than other civil servants. Injuries due to riots are common among correctional officers. The inmates riot when they become discontented with how their affairs are managed. Such riots may lead to deaths of prisoners or wardens thus rendering the whole of correction process a sham. The author says that that a block in the Sing Sing prison can house a maximum of 684 prisoners. Surely, life in such a block is full of stress because of congestion and noise. When conditions become unbearable, violence erupts in the prison leading to escape attempts and deaths.

Ted says that the United States adopted corporal correction of criminals from Europe. The author cites James S. Kunen who argued that before independence, the Americans just mutilated the prisoners who had been caught in minor crimes. However, as time went by, the American society adopted a better measure of incarceration instead of corporal corrections to motivate the prisoners to adopt reform and become useful to the society upon parole (p. 172-3)

The book *Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing* is important in courses dealing with corrections since it provides that real situation at the ground with additional information on how the correctional officers should behave to improve the quality of correction service. When correctional officers conduct their duties

professionally, the whole process of correction becomes a success. Scholars researching on correctional services find this book very useful since it uncovers all the shortcomings of the correctional services in a model prison. The book is very reliable since it is written by a person who has been in that service and is aware of everything that transpires in prisons, the problems and possible solutions.

Works cited

Conover, Ted. *Newjack: Guarding Sing Sing*. New York: Random House, 2000. Print.